

NEW YORK STATE  
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE  
40 NORTH PEARL STREET  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12243-0001

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FROM:

Brian Wing

Phone:

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SUBJECT:

NOTES:

Comments on  
Docket # 96-128\*\*\*\*\*  
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Brian J. Wing  
Commissioner

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July 14, 1998

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Sir/Madam:

I wish to take this opportunity to provide comment on the Implementation of Pay Telephone Reclassification and Compensation Provisions of the Telecommunication Act of 1996, Second Report and Order, CC Docket No. 96-128, 13 FCC Red 1778 (1997). Though comment is specifically sought on issues raised by the decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in MCI Telecommunications Corporation; et.al.v. FCC, I wish to bring to your attention the significant and harmful effect that this order has on the delivery of government services to citizens.

Many state and federal government information and crisis intervention toll-free numbers, particularly those that serve low income and at risk populations, are affected by this order. Examples include child abuse hotlines, domestic violence hotlines, suicide hotlines, and teenage runaway hotlines. Under the order, government must now incur the additional cost of pay phone access to its 800/888 numbers. In many instances government does not have the option to block pay phone access where critical services are involved. The costs of providing pay phone access under the terms of the order can be considerable. As an example, we project that the additional cost to NY's EBT customer service hotline to provide pay phone access to recipients to check their account balances, to report lost or stolen cards or unauthorized access, and to otherwise obtain benefit information is 1.2 to 1.5 million dollars per year. The order represents an unfunded mandate where service level cannot conscionably be reduced. Certainly the budgetary impact was not recognized.

The order has caused us and many other government agencies to look for ways to avoid or mitigate this new cost. In instances where access to information or services is of a less critical nature, the current level of access will have to be reduced. Pay phone blocking may be the only viable

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alternative to avoid the cost-prohibitive charge. The unintended result of the order is the curtailment of access by citizens to government information and services. I urge you to remedy this situation by exempting government-operated 800/888 numbers from the fees. Such access should be permitted at no additional charge as a public service.

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Wing

Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
Room 222  
1919 M St., NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20554